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ABSTRACT

The history of the college reading improvement program is traced and summarized from 1915 to 1970. The major factors which influenced and shaped the development during 5 decades are listed. During the period from 1920 to 1929, reading tests, tachistoscopes, workbooks, and eye cameras became readily available. From 1930 to 1939, the advent of mechanical aids influenced program development. The decade from 1940 to 1949 saw the continued proliferation of programs (258 in 1942) and the conflict of competing ideologies. Commercial interest in adult reading programs and the organization of several professional reading groups characterized the period from 1950 to 1959. Although large amounts of federal aid to reading programs became available from 1960 to 1969, college programs, per se, received a relatively small share. During the 55-year history of the college reading program, a body of relevant literature has evolved. Major sources of information on college reading are cited. A 36-item bibliography is attached. (WB)

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The Rise of College Reading:

The Good, The Bad, and The Indifferent: 1915-1970

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It would only be fair to transliterate the terms used in the title of this paper. By "college reading" we mean those reading improvement programs offerred to college students. We are the "indifferent", the hucksters are the "baddies" and the students are, as they always have been,"good". Just in case you have not had time to read Leedy's (14) dissertation or other historical publications (18), a brief review of college reading history will be presented. This is done so that those who need to will realize the past of our profession which would have been less save for persistent professionals. Last year we had a fine small group meeting here with lots of non-indifferent comment. (16) It was a pleasant experience. And, now, a brief resume' of the history of college reading.

Prior to 1920. Moore (21) reported in 1915 what was considered to be the earliest sustained attempt to formally help college students with their reading. Morre's evaluation was that no conclusions could be drawn, but he felt that if the work of the students could be improved the work of the college would become more effective (21). Moore's Harvard program report was followed by those of the University of Chicago, University of Illinois, Hamline University, and Columbia University (14). Betts and Betts (3) listed numerous reports published prior to 1930, and Lowe (18) and Leedy (14) discussed the early surveys and programs. The early researchers (1) were concerned with how well the training received in reading actual school materials such as texts, journal articles, magazine items, and newspaper columns would "stay" or become permanent. "How well students worked

'with a watch held over them'" was another evaluative device often discussed. Also some effort was made to help the students in the programs to "settle down and study" for varying lengths of time. Because of a lack of standardized reading tests, study habits inventories, and sophisticated research techniques, quantitative evaluative data were not available. Much subjective observation was made, however, using a lot of "if's" and "hope's".

1920 - 1929. By the year 1920, reading tests, tachistoscopes, workbooks, and eye cameras were available for use in college reading programs. Doctoral dissertations and Masters theses on this topic began to be reported (3, 29). The NSSE Yearbook, Part II for 1921 (26), contained some pages devoted to college reading. Numerous articles on college reading appeared in the literature. Most of the reading instruction was offered as part of "how to study" programs or was given during an "orientation period".

It was stated or implied in the published reports that some type of evaluation was used. The types given were: reading in less time; consumption of materials; ability to write questions on what was read; and the reading status of college students. Much time was devoted to see how well these students read, but in reality ". . . there were few courses specifically designed for the inefficient silent reader in college. . . (14, p.261)". In the decade from 1920-1929 evidently only one, the first (S1), survey was made to see what was being done in college reading programs. Apparently, there wasn't another made until 1937 (S2). Parr's 1929 survey (S1) was part of a doctoral thesis which concerned a college level remedial reading program. He received seven reports of programs; however, there were more programs in existence. (6)

Evaluative comments were made by six respondents. The teachers of these programs felt that they had "evidence" that the aid received in

the program improved the reading skills of the students and that "evidence" also was at hand to prove that the student did better college work as a result of the help received (S1).

The first two reading tests designed for college students were published in 1929 by Eurick and Haggarty (10, 11). The speed test was standardized with over 2,000 students, and the comprehension test was standardized using more than 5,000 students. As of this year, there were at least fifteen such tests available. There were many others including vocabulary, phonics, listening and oral reading tests. Thus, definite studies were being made and changes in student behavior were being noted.

Two evaluative reports were published in 1929. These were descriptions of the Buffalo (12) programs and the Syracuse (7) programs. The programs were designed for students who had poor grades and/or had failed. The directors of the programs felt that the program "saved" many students who needed help in reading and allowed them to keep up with their previously better-performing peers.

During the years 1920-29, increasing numbers of reading programs were developed. A desire on the part of many directors of such programs was to prove the value of the course to themselves, the students, and their school administrators.

1930 - 1939. During the decade 1930-39, college reading programs became different because of the invention of the pacer and other mechanical devices (14, 18). Numerous workbooks, reading films, a controlled reader, a pacer, the metronoscope, tachistoscopes, and other materials were invented during this time. The "speed" and "comprehension" adherents seemingly need different views and the controversy began regarding "eye

training" and "reading training". Experimentation with college students became a focal point for some disagreement (14).

There were four surveys of CRIP's published during this period (18), the most extensive of which was Strang's (S2). She found that eighty-two of 152 schools contacted, listed programs. No two programs reported were alike. A total of fourteen different reading tests were used in the programs. As in the earlier periods, psychology and education departments sponsored most of the programs.

Evaluation, descriptive, and predictive studies were reported at a new high during the 1930-39 period. Betts and Betts (3) listed seventeen such studies published between 1930 and 1939. College reading had become a research area of high interest. Many writers seemed more interested in proving a point than in helping students in reading (18). There were sixteen doctoral dissertations written on the topic of college reading during this time (29) (including one (28) written by the now President of C.B.S., Frank S. Stanton).

Students were required to spend their time reading (rather than listening to lecture) and to read in wider areas. Other reading tests appeared and entering freshmen were given reading tests. Guidance and counseling became a permanent part of college life during the period 1930 to 1939.

1940 - 1949. At least fourteen doctoral dissertations were written on college reading during this period (29) and no fewer than eight surveys (18) were published during the decade. Triggs (31) reported 258 programs for the fall of 1942, and Lindquist (18) discussed 165 programs in operation for the year 1947. The literature of this decade was somewhat replete for the varying ideologies such as: Speed vs. Comprehension; Intelligence vs. Reading; Reading vs. College grades; and Mechanical vs.

Natural Reading. The use of the tachistoscope by the armed forces prompted many college reading teachers to base their programs on the use of this machine (18). The return of veterans who never dreamed of college demanded a quick, fruitful CRIP to help these men and women overcome reading deficiencies. In 1941, a report (6) was published in which it was mentioned that the Ancient Harvard-Yale rivalry now included speed-reading experiments. Ammons and Hieronymus (2) presented a discussion of a reading program based on a critical evaluation point of view in 1947.

One of the pioneer workers in the CRIP field was Frances Oralind Triggs. Her contributions included reading tests (32), a teacher's manual (33), and professional articles (31). In an allied field, Francis P. Robinson's Effective Study (27) was published first in 1941 and was revised in 1961. Triggs' and Robinson's texts furnished a great deal of help to CRIP teachers who used them. The methods used in CRIP's involved combining aid in reading, study, and other phases of the language arts. No permanent, unequivocal answer to perennial questions seemed to be available except in the minds of some who evidently either had something to sell or were convinced that their technique alone was sufficient. Many institutions of higher education evidently preferred not to commence a CRIP. In these same schools, however, were found basic English, Speech, and other rudimentary courses. Films, pacers, workbooks, and other materials for CRIP's became increasingly available during this decade.

1950 - 1959. The Korean War, Evelyn Woods Reading Dynamics, The Controlled Reader, the SRA boxes, pacers, films, workbooks, the National Reading Conference, the College Reading Association, the International Reading Association, thirty-one doctoral dissertations in college reading and nineteen surveys of CRIPs all contributed to make that decade one of high controversy and one in which firm professional dedication was needed. During this time, business and industry seemingly became aware that

there was a market in materials for reading programs. In this ten year period the rise of the privately operated rapid reading program was found. (In one "program" six lessons for $150.00 were offered as all one needed to read "80,000 W.P.M.") The major question seemed to be: "How fast can one read and yet comprehend what he is reading?"

By evidence of Miller's reports (20) on machines and workbooks, the aforementioned nineteen surveys (18), thirty-one doctoral dissertations (28), over 500 studies (5), countless newspaper and magazine articles, many radio and TV Broadcasts, numerous reading conferences and the definite rise in the number of reading program offered by institutions of higher learning, it was found that reading had affected different people in many ways.

Since 1950, much change occurred in the field of reading. The 1950-59 decade seemed to be one of organization and professionalism partly because of the rise of private business in psychology and reading. The American Psychological Association became more rigid in it's membership requirements in 1958-59. Some neophytes to the field, unless carefully guided by competent mentors, found themselves confused, insecure, and frustrated because of the plethora of opinion, research, materials, and machines extant during 1950-59 (14,18). It seems that this is still true as of 1970.

The Yearbooks of the N.R.C., the I.R.A. Proceedings, the Journal of Reading, C.R.A. Proceedings, and Psychological Abstracts appeared to be the best sources in which were located articles on college reading. The only comprehensive, reliable gearly review of research in college reading is that of Bliesmer (5). These reviews, as they are very carefully prepared, may be relied upon heavily. Bliesmer started writing

these reviews in 1952. (Sommerfield wrote the 1957 review and Lowe assisted with the 1960 and 1961 reviews.)

It was found that the rate vs. comprehension arguments were reported quite often in the literature. Bliesmer (4) found approximately one-hundred such studies reported between the years 1950 - 1959. Westover's critical review (34) of the research in "controlled reading" was made in 1958, as was Karlin's (13). Reports of programs were found in abundance and Mike Nicholls and Elaine May, on an NBC "Moniton" program in 1956 made the following remark about a then sixth grader; "so he can't read now, don't worry, all colleges have reemeedial reading". It was found that during the 1950's all views regarding CRIP's were brought out in print.

1960 - 1969. No news story of the decade surpassed the accounting of John F. Kennedy's death. Mr. Kennedy was quite an excellent reader evidently, and a former student of a "reading program". News was occurring in reading in the 1960's and literally billions of dollars were spent by the Federal Government for teachers' salaries, teacher training, materials, research, machines, and auxiliary expenses in the field of reading at the elementary, secondary, college, and adult levels. College reading, per se, received the smallest amount.

Bliesmer (5) reported more than eight-hundred research studies for the years 1960-69. As of the year 1966, Lowe (18) found nineteen published surveys of CRIP's in the literature. As of the balance of 1966, at least seventy per-cent of the institutions of higher learning in the State of Florida offered a CRIP (19). A Master's candidate at Rutgers contacted 400 colleges in 1966, and found 200 CRIP's in operation.*

*Personal conference with Dr. Martin Kling, the student's advisor in December, 1966.

To further study the CRIP situation, a review was made of the presentations made at the 1969 meeting of the N.R.C. There were a total of over eighty presentations on various phases of secondary and college-adult reading. The attendance figures were incomplete, but about 500 people attended the three day meeting. The topics were as varied as possible with some discussions being held on "rapid readers". There were over forty display tables of materials and machines.

Edwards (9) stated in 1966 that, in his opinion, reading was in it's "adolescent period" of development. A careful perusal of journal advertisements should show the reader the abundance of materials available in these 60's. So I guess we are still in a growth spurt. During this period, a report on "how to teach your baby to read" (8) was published. The speed reading companies such as Reading Dynamics, Optimation, Visual Concepts, Readability, Rapid Reading Foundation, and others including some college based people, all claimed to be able to teach people to read fast and one report claimed rates of "250 words per second" (30).

A phenomenon found on many campuses was the existence of two or three reading programs often sponsored by different departments. A typical situation found was the remedial and/or corrective course for "poor readers" and a speed-reading course for "those who were good but wanted to be better" (18).

In the past decade, at least five major conferences were held each year which were devoted in part or totally to college reading. Yearbooks, proceedings, journals, books, and special publications were published at a new high.

The greatest single impact in reading in the 1960's was seemingly made by companies which manufactured reading machines. The E. D. L.

Controlled Reader, The Craig Reader, The Perceptoscope, The Tachomatic 500, Hoffman Reader, and other visually orientated machines were used in virtually every college reading class. Pacers were sold by the hundreds daily. Programmed materials made great inroads with like advances made by "learning machines". In 1953, fourteen per-cent of the programmed courses available were in the language arts areas.

Raygor (25) stated in 1966 that programmed materials were needed and that teachers should use them and that probably teachers would hav to use them. Pressy originated what is now called "programmed learning" (22). He felt that there might be something of a breakthrough in psycho-educational methodology, markedly increasing educational efficiency, and shortening overlong programs (23). Evidently Dr. Pressy's hopes and fears (22) were realized regarding programmed reading materials and machines orientated reading programs. A 1965 publication of the I.R.A. (15) edited by Paul Leedy, the historian of college reading (14), included excellent summaries of the literature pertinent to the study of college reading improvement programs. Ray (24) presented a summary of investigation relating to the evaluating of CRIP's in 1964.

A perusal of the program for the 1969 N.R.C. Annual meeting and for the 1970 C.R.A. Conference can leave little doubt that college reading is a major aspect of higher education. But, based on our review of the literature, experience in teaching, and associations with fellow professionals, we have to ask "What's it all about?" (Maybe there is an Alfie in the group.)

Have we been so interested in "results" that we have ignored the students? Have our objectives been so narrow that mechanics of reading have been overemphasized? Have we read and understood research well? A new institution of higher learning opens it's doors and usually

has a sign pointing toward some type of reading program in approximately a week on the average. Who teaches college reading? Are they trained professionals, or what? Someone once said a lady is known best by how she is treated so it may be that a reading teacher may be judged by his or her program, and especially how the students are treated. We cannot consider ourselves so "good" that we cannot improve and fight for the integrity of our profession.

The cras-commercial reading people, especially the "rapid reading racketeers", stay in business (like any other crooks) because of the ignorance, greed, apathy, and false hope of the general public and evidently an indifferent group of professional reading people. For example, it took the I.R.A. ten, count 'em, ten years to even state that they had a resolution to check on rate hucksters! We have to police our own profession as does medicine, dentistry, optometry and psychology. The police and Better Business Bureaus cannot act without evidence and/or complaints based on law and human welfare. George Spache and this writer had dealt with certain business operations in Florida with some success. (Now it's the dyslexia people and companies guaranteeing "a year's gain or your money back" for reading programs.) We have stood by and let this happen.

And the students. The wonderful, young, hopeful, trusting, revolutionary, loving students (17). I wonder what that group of students at Harvard in 1915 thought about the "help" they were offered?

In preparing this paper and cleaning out my office, I looked over my class files on every CRIP I had ever taught. Many memories came back to please, tease, and haunt me. The students who dared me to help them, the ones who were scared, the resentful ones, the "prove it to me" ones

and the docile ones, all were remembered. The all "F" student who is now a dentist, the kick out who is now a practicing physician, the father and son who came to find each other in a class, and the ones who did not come along and were lost somewhere. Overall, they were a fine group of students circa 1958-60. But now it is 1970, and a whole new ball game. It is my feeling that we are going to have to re-evaluate what we are doing in college reading.

In conclusion, we cannot remain indifferent to the commercial people or the students. As teachers, we ought to demand of ourselves a dedication to being an active professional. If we don't, I am afraid that the good students and the bad companies will prove us to be not needed nor wanted. Think about it, the companies and the students have.

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